

**Advisory Council for the Education of
Students with Disabilities
Minutes**

**January 26, 2004
Holiday Inn Express Airport
1111 Airport Center Drive
Nashville, TN 37214**

Members of the Council in Attendance

Mary Beth Brooke
Paula Brownyard
James Burton
Marci Campbell
Jeff Finney
Tim Fite
Kyle Hauth

Cynthia Higginbotham
Beulah Oldham
Jennifer Partlow
Rex Roberts
James Topp
Lynn Sherrod

Members of the Council not in Attendance

Jerry Johnson

Lisa McCullough

State Employees in Attendance

Brenda Bledsoe
Joseph Fisher
Ann Hampton
Jessica Harbison
Davis Hines

Donna Parker
Steve Sparks
Hiram Tate
Bill Ward

Visitors in Attendance

Loria Hubbard, The ARC of Tennessee
Ashten Johnson, Student
Larrick Johnson, Parent
Walter Rogers, The ARC of TN
Alena Sampson, STEP

Welcome

Dr. Topp called the meeting to order and the Council recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Agenda

Agenda was approved with no changes.

Approval of Minutes from October 27, 2003

The Council accepted the minutes of the October meeting with no changes.

Report from the Chair

Dr. Topp stressed the importance of Member attendance and thanked everyone for his or her participation in this quarterly meeting.

Public Input

Mr. Larrick Johnson and his son were present to address the Council regarding a lack of qualified interpreters available in their school district and the effect this situation is having on his son's education and possibility of attending college. With Mr. Larrick's comments complete, he and his son departed the meeting to give the Council an opportunity to discuss this issue. Different available service options and the possibility of developing a report on interpreter certification during the next year were mentioned. Mr. Fisher indicated that the Division of Special Education (DSE) would look into the situation to take appropriate action and would send a letter to Mr. Johnson notifying him of this intent.

Final Approval of Annual Report for 2002-2003 school year

The Council reviewed the proposed report and voted to accept with the addition of a comments/questions insert for public feedback/input. The final report will be presented to Council members at the April meeting.

Closing the Gap Workgroup Update

After reviewing all standardized tests last fall, the Deputy Commissioner of Education asked that a group be brought together to review available data and research and to make recommendations to "close the gap" in achievement scores. Practitioners in general and special education working with the U.S. Department of Education funded Mid South Regional Resource Center in Kentucky looked at proven and effective training and scientific research for refining and defining the curriculum. If an IEP isn't aligned with the curriculum, then that student will not do well on a test that is curriculum based. Also, mandated training for teachers and administrators would help level out training results. Mr. Fisher had a chance to visit Sequatchie County Schools to observe their inclusive practices and deemed it a "model site".

Federal Register December 9, 2003, regarding Changes in Testing

Recent interpretation changes will effect the testing of lower functioning students that meet TCAP-Alt criteria. A letter dated January 2, 2004 from Joseph Fisher and Dr. Ben Brown, Executive Director of Evaluation and Assessment on accommodations was presented to the Council stating that in light of new interpretations of regulations under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, the State Department of Education (SDE) is extending the use of Special Accommodation C (Read Aloud/Sign Internal Test Instructions) and Special Accommodation D (Read Aloud/Sign Internal Test Items) to TCAP tests measuring achievement in the areas of reading and language arts for students with IEPs who appropriately and consistently use these accommodations during their regular instruction. In a letter dated January 5, 2004, it states the

Academic Skills Assessment (or what is considered “out-of-level” testing) would no longer be allowed under NCLB. States and districts can give alternative assessments and have their scores counted as “proficient or advanced” toward meeting the federal mandate of showing “adequate yearly progress” (AYP). Originally, however, only up to 1% of all students in the grade levels tested can have their scores counted as “proficient” on alternative standards for AYP calculations. This has now been changed to more than 1% can be tested with only 1% of scores being submitted as “proficient or advanced”.

Presentation on an English “Special Needs” School: A comparison between TN and British Special Education Schools

Dr. Topp had the opportunity to visit a special education school during a trip to London. Through the use of a multi-media presentation and handouts, he shared with the Council information and pictures gathered of the facility, the staff and the students being served noting such aspects as their use of assistive technology, an all electronic IEP and the student to teacher ratios.

Caseload/Class Size Task Force Update

Paula Brownyard was introduced then to update the Council on the efforts of the Caseload/Class Task Force. Made up of representatives from advocacy groups, local systems, the State Board, State Department of Education, the Advisory Council and the Tennessee Education Association, this group has been looking closely at what data is currently available regarding the effects of caseload and class size standards, what further data is needed and how to gather and interpret that data. Three subcommittees have been formed to look at each individual component (Caseload limits, Special Education Class Size and Inclusion). These subcommittees met and compiled recommendations for the committee to discuss including additions/changes to the census program to include BEP weighted student index, and an annual report indicating the number of teaching positions generated by the BEP, among others. The task force will meet again on February 10, 2004 to review all requested data before further recommendations are brought before the Council for approval and then presented to the State Board.

Department Update

Ann Hampton informed the Council that the SDE has announced the restructuring of the six Regional Resource Offices into nine Field Service Centers. All Special Education staff in the field will now be located in one of the Field Service Centers in an effort to make the Department more inclusive in their services to all children. Intervention Team members from Special Education are assigned to each office. Special Education field staff will continue to monitor LEA services including the over- and under-identification of minorities and other issues and ensure equitable assessment of all students in addition to looking for ways to decrease the dropout rate. A satisfaction survey for parents has been developed and will be distributed during a four-year cycle in line with local monitoring. Confidentiality being a concern of many parents, this survey will be anonymous and forwarded to the local district via the Department. Part C mails a survey to parents each year, however, return rate is low. The National Monitoring Center is looking at developing a survey that will go beyond satisfaction and into involvement.

Tennessee served as a test state for this new system/database for comparison with other states. The SDE website also has announcements of Council events along with other trainings, such as the Annual Spring Conference. Also, the Commissioner's weekly announcements are sent to directors of schools and principals.

Update on State Improvement Grant (SIG) and General Supervision Enhancement Grant (GSEG)

Brenda Bledsoe presented the Council with an update on these grants, which are an effort to link Part B and Part C. The State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) has planned a retreat for April and Ms. Bledsoe invited the Council Chair or a representative of the Council to attend. The GSEG was awarded for approximately \$500,000 for one year with no cost extension for one or two years focusing on an integrated web-based data management system that can be accessed throughout the state and used to transfer records electronically. Consultants will be located within the SDE but hired and employed through the University of Kentucky. There is also discussion on how to link Part C data for better transition. The SIG is a five year grant which will focus more on local improvement. This grant was approved with conditions such as focusing primarily on literacy with a relationship to the Reading First program already developed and improving pre-literacy skills. At least seventy-five percent of funds from this grant must be utilized for personnel development and there will be specific criteria applied regarding the selection of schools. The school must first be approved by Reading First as a target school, there must be both rural and urban test sites for the kickoff, the schools must receive both federal and state funding and the state is charged with bringing research-based models. Kindergarten through 3rd grade Reading First schools will come first, followed by our efforts for students who are not responding to methods and moving on to 4th through 8th reading interventions with 9th through 12th also. Six schools will be selected to participate first year to help develop the model with one school added each year thereafter.

Other Business

Dr. Topp reminded everyone of the Government Operations Committee, Education Subcommittee discussion to reauthorize the Advisory Council. Updated information regarding Council activities was presented and reauthorization was recommended by the subcommittee for another four years, however, this recommendation will be forwarded to the General Assembly for approval in the form of a bill that must be voted on by both houses and signed by the Governor. He also mentioned the upcoming Special Education Annual Spring Conference and encouraged Council members to attend. Kyle Hauth volunteered to attend the SICC retreat in April.

Marci Campbell reported on her attendance at the National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems (NCCRESt) in Baltimore on November 2-3, 2003 as parent representative for the Tennessee State Team for Mid South States. They worked on NCLB issues (such as disproportionality), analyzing data, Map the Network needs and outcomes Activity Plan and Evaluation Plan and developing plans for technical assistance and professional development. Marci also attended and led conferences with Jessica Beasley, LRE for LIFE Project, on working on anger control and teaching in positive at the Fast Conference in Knoxville, October 2003.

The Council then set the following meeting dates for the next year:

April 19, 2004

July 26, 2004

October 18, 2004

January 24, 2005

Dr. Topp adjourned the meeting.